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Karina's Legacy

Diana Goodman

This piece won first place in creative writing at the 1996 National Honor Society District Convention.

The dark street of the alley behind the club was filled with desperate souls. Sitting, standing, falling, tripping, the dazed kids begged the darkness to accept them. Smoky air obscured vision, and oh that stench! The screeching of the band inside the club was barely audible. The ground was littered with dirty needles and cigarette butts. No one wanted to be there; no one wanted to be anywhere else.

Fumbling with her lighter, Karina finally lit the clove hanging from her mouth. Her bleeding lungs welcomed the soothing smoke while her knowing eyes tried in vain not to see. All around her, faceless children waited for this drug or that to take the pain away. Suddenly nauseated, Karina stumbled to her feet and did her best to wipe the ashes off her long black dress. A hand tugged at her ankle. She looked down and saw a vaguely familiar figure crouched against the brick wall.

He offered her a needle. She almost accepted but felt that it would be too much of an effort to sit down again. Instead, she walked awkwardly forward a few steps and grasped the handle of the back door of the club.

Inside, a big room painted black was filled beyond capacity. Karina took another long drag and threw her clove into the mindless crowd. She laughed at the ignorance of those around her. She knew that they had never been in the alley. Some thrashing guitar players and a painted up lead singer peopled the stage at the front of the room. Wanting to escape her thoughts, Karina let the raw

music pulsate through her blood. She pushed her long raven hair behind her ears and began dancing with some girls next to her. Soon bored, she pushed her way through the sweaty bodies until she was directly in front of the stage. She glared at the boy with the microphone. Black and white makeup was streaked across his face and his thin body was clad in black leather. These boys were all the same. Intrigued, the singer glared back and soon the band took a break. Karina went straight up to the leather boy and stroked his hair. She loved silky hair. He looked at her a moment, took her hand, and led her outside, back into the alley. Wet tongues, slippery hands and then Karina again curled up against that brick wall as the obscure sounds of the band came rushing into her ears. But that didn't matter. She lit another clove. The light brightened the alley for a moment and exposed the frightened kids. This was the future for American children, and oh what fun it was!

Repulsed to the depths of her soul, Karina crawled out of the alley leaving her burning clove on the ground. Reaching the street, Karina stopped for a moment. Something had arrested her attention. A discarded black candle lay on the sidewalk. She picked it up and, walking into the middle of the street, sat down with it. She placed it directly in front of her and slowly lit the wick. As it burned she thought of her wasted life. She could stand no more nights like this. She vowed to save herself, and with this conviction she threw the candle through the front window of the club. Before long everyone stood in a huddled mass on the pavement watching the club go up in flames and smoke. Even the alley kids were there watching. Karina smiled; she was waking up mankind.